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Reinterpreting the Past by British Second World War Veterans**

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**Pilgrimage for Anglo-Japanese Reconciliation:  
Reinterpreting the Past by British Second World War Veterans**

**Kyoko Murakami**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, I would like to present a case of Anglo-Japanese reconciliation after the Second World War, in which a pilgrimage was pivotal to British veterans achieving reconciliation with the Japanese. For them, the pilgrimage to Japan was more than an analogy. It was the basis and vehicle for attaining an international reconciliation, which had been overdue by more than half a century. I seek to argue that the pilgrimage to Japan offers war veterans and their family members a frame where meaning-making can be actualised.

The study of national and personal reconciliation in mainstream psychology tends to focus on how a person internally experiences conflict by having to ‘cognitively’ deal with dissonance in order to achieve mental harmony. I employ in this chapter an alternative approach to this mentalist model of reconciliation. This approach can be characterised as holistic and integrated and it explores the experience of conflict in terms of a person’s relation to the lived world and the discursive practice of working out a troubled past through remembering. In my previous work on reconciliation I have examined the phenomenon of reconciliation as a discursive accomplishment (Murakami 2012). What follows here is my attempt to extend this work by drawing on discursive psychology (e.g. Potter & Wetherell 1987). In so doing, I would like to shed deeper insight into the practice of reconciliation by focussing on how people work with a troubled past through a specific activity such as pilgrimage. This should further support the idea of a material basis for social rituals of remembering as commemorative practice (Murakami 2014; Murakami in press).

In discussing the case of the pilgrimage for Anglo-Japanese reconciliation, I wish to suggest that pilgrimage is not confined to a particular purpose, whether religious or secular,

and that there is a blurred boundary between military pilgrimage and secular/religious pilgrimage. It is in this blurred boundary that a life review is afforded; a reinterpretation of the past through opening up dialogues and reunions with historic enemies. It provides valuable opportunities for being and becoming other than spiteful and bitter Far Eastern veterans, who harbour hatred against the Japanese, and it gives them a meaningful potential for a new future.

I will begin by outlining battlefield pilgrimage and tourism research in the social sciences and humanities and the key concepts and theories concerning the structure and process of a pilgrimage. I will then present the unprecedented case of an Anglo-Japanese reconciliation – in particular, describing how the veterans’ trip to Japan, which they call ‘the pilgrimage to Japan’, was instrumental in achieving Anglo-Japanese reconciliation. In so doing, I would like to address the significance of pilgrimage in supporting veterans more generally, as well as others who were affected by war and conflict.

Much pilgrimage research shows that the veterans’ desire to return to the old battlefield is very common for many war veterans (Reader and Walter 1993, Walter, 1993). Previously, I examined a case of a British Burma campaign veterans’ reunion as a pilgrimage (Murakami 2014). I used the term pilgrimage as an analogy to theorise the veterans’ reunion as a materially mediated commemorative practice. Reunion as a liminal process is structured by various rituals and ceremonies, activities, encounters and interaction that shape new experiences of being with others. It allows the veterans to appreciate a renewed understanding of the war in question and dislodge the negative consequences of conflict. By being away from everyday life, the reunion creates a liminal state where the participants experience ‘communitas’ through taking part in joint rituals and spending time together. Victor Turner (1995/1969) sees the liminal process as transformative. Instead of taking part in battleground pilgrimage to Burma and India, the Burma veterans, who are in their late 80s

and early 90s and in ailing health, manage to travel to the UK veterans' reunions and rekindle a camaraderie which might help them generate newer meanings and a fresher understanding of the war (Murakami 2014).

I have researched this process of reconciliation between the British veterans and their Japanese counterparts for the last decade or so (Murakami 2001, 2007, 2012). A group of 26 British visitors including veterans, who were interned in a Japanese prison camp during the Second World War, and their family members embarked on a reconciliation trip to Japan, almost half a century after the war's end. They called this one-week trip 'the pilgrimage to Japan' and it took place during October 1992. A few Japanese expats in London were instrumental in opening up opportunities for the veterans to work on reconciliation with the Japanese. They helped them return to the former prison camp site, as well as undertake some sightseeing in Japan and meet the villagers whom they worked with and associated with during their time as prisoners of war. The former campsite was not by any scholarly definition a sacred site for religious pilgrimage purposes, but it was near to the site where British soldiers, who died in the camp, had been buried. This site had become a place for pilgrimage and it was here that the Anglo-Japanese reconciliation ceremony was held.

Through this case study, I would like to suggest that the British veterans' pilgrimage to Japan, especially to the prison camp site, provided them with a unique opportunity to see the well-kept graves<sup>i</sup> of their deceased fellow POWs, as well as help them remember the time that they shared with Japanese people. Significant to the pilgrimage as a practice of commemoration, the wartime was recalled jointly with the local people whom they knew then as well as a new generation of Japanese. The trip afforded an opportunity to reinterpret not only the difficult times of being a prisoner in Japan and Malaya but also the post-war period when they were hardly able to express their views and share their struggles on their return to Britain.

The pilgrimage experience gave them, therefore, a new perspective towards an otherwise fixed, negative image of the Japanese in a new context and time. The trip was not meant as a return to old times and memories but as an opportunity to create new meanings around the experience they had at the camp and their post-war lives. This reinterpretation and reconfiguration of the meaning of the difficult pasts can be attributed to the pilgrimage, where the veterans come to realise that the experience can be open to reinterpretation and acknowledge that they can conceive of themselves as being other than a bitter person, hating anything to do with Japan and Japanese people. The pilgrimage helped open the otherwise closed dialogue between the veterans and Japanese people in the post-war period.

### **Pilgrimage and tourism research**

In a commonly accepted term, a pilgrimage connotes a religious activity, generally referring to a journey to a holy place undertaken from motives of devotion in order to obtain supernatural help or as an act of penance or thanksgiving (Livingstone 2006). Focusing on sacred places in the world religions, Coleman and Elsner (1995) provide a definition of pilgrimage that extends the physical journey through time and space to metaphorical resonances on many levels (see also Katić in this volume). More relevant to this case study is their appreciation that the experience can be psychological. They note that ‘a pilgrimage may also be a rite of passage involving transformations of one’s inner state and outer status; it may be a quest for a transcendent goal; it may entail the long-desired healing of a physical or spiritual ailment’ (Coleman and Elsner 1995: 6). Another definition of pilgrimage is provided by Hyde and Herman (2011) who see pilgrimage as a journey to a non-substitutable site that embodies the highly valued, the deeply meaningful, or a source of core identity for the traveller. Pilgrimage involves both physical and psychological processes, therefore, and it can have an enduring effect on the way people make sense of their lives.

In studying pilgrimage to Lourdes, one of the most famous of its kind, Eade (1992) challenged the key concepts used to analyse Christian pilgrimage according to the Turnerian tradition and revealed the complexity of pilgrimage phenomena in terms of the contestation of meanings, the tensions and ambiguities of interpretations and the rich diversity lying behind the category of 'pilgrim' (see also Baraniecka-Olszewska in this volume). Eade's study, along with others (e.g., Sallnow 1981; also Eade in this volume) opens up an alternative approach, which seeks to produce non-essentialist accounts of pilgrimage and related phenomena such as contemporary tourism. These critiques of the popular Turnerian model can be applied to the research on battlefield pilgrimage including the war grave and prison camp visits. They help us in approaching pilgrimage phenomena without being trapped into making a sharp separation between secular and religious pilgrimage.

Clearly, people are swayed by a mixture of motives. These motives are evident in both religious and secular pilgrimages. Hyde and Harman report on one case of 'secular pilgrimage' involving a journey by Australians and New Zealanders to the Gallipoli battlefields in Turkey (Hyde and Harman 2011), where they identify five distinct motives – spiritual, nationalistic, family pilgrimage, friendship and travel motives. The interpretation of the pilgrimage experience also frequently varies depending on the person, the occasion and the severity of both physical and mental injury, damage and trauma, which might be involved. The British veterans in question here appear to have had multiple motives in going on a trip to Japan that was intended to achieve reconciliation with local people. Even during fieldwork for my study they were often vague about why they had taken part in a pilgrimage to a site with such a troubled past. They explained that they had been initially sceptical and reluctant to accept the idea that the Japanese villagers had refurbished the graves of the British POWs after they had left the camp and had been taking care of the graves right up to the present.

Likewise, the benefits of taking part in pilgrimages are difficult to attribute to a single dimension of the pilgrimage as to how the pilgrim's motive is fulfilled. For instance, a study of Vietnam veterans pilgrimage to the memorial in Washington, D.C. suggests that the pilgrimage led to short-term improvements in several post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and long term improvements for some participants, but to equally considerable exacerbations for others within a subset of symptoms (Watson, Tuorila, Detra, Gearhart and Wielkiewicz 1995). Although the benefit of the battlefield pilgrimage to the total recovery of mental health and wellbeing of the pilgrim cannot be overstated, one can appreciate that the battlefield and prison camp pilgrimage may contribute to the veterans' making a considerable shift in their positioning toward the wartime enemies.

Battlefield pilgrimage also involves tourism for some (see also Baraniecka-Olszewska in this volume). Visits combine a serious purpose with recreation or exhibit a gradual transformation of meaning from the serious to non-serious (Nolan and Nolan 1992). Keil (2005) examines a type of tourism visit which inhabits an ambiguous territory of meaning, crossing boundaries between the conceptual domains of pilgrimage, commemoration and pleasure-seeking. Clearly, there is a distinction in behaviour between pilgrimage and pleasure-seeking in cultural or heritage tourism (e.g., holocaust tourism) or 'in the case of sites of high collective significance, items of the built, cultural or natural environment, which are rich in symbolic meaning and which both reference and ground collective memory, continuity and identity' (Ibid: 479). As in many battleground tourism cases, these visits and activities have emerged in response to traumatic histories, and also reflect the growth of secular forms of spiritual experience, where the pursuit of revelation has personal significance.

The pilgrimage discussed in this chapter raises similar issues to the visits to holocaust memorial sites, which solicit questions about memory and forgetting, guilt and redemption,

and meaning and ownership. Halbwachs (1992) argues that the grounding of collective memory in sacralised locations and structures leads towards the distancing, externalizing and disarming of traumatic memory. Furthermore, visitor motivations and experiences are polysemic: fractured, ambivalent, unstable, and resistant to paradigms of either the sacred or the profane.

### **Pilgrimage as commemoration**

Significant sites for pilgrimages are represented within a context of cultural and social tradition and history. They are items of collective memory and visits to them form part of the social construction of rituals of remembering and the grounding of both personal and collective memory in physical place (Halbwachs 1992). As in the visits to Vietnam memorials and other memorial sites, pilgrimage weaves personal memory into the public memory through the material form of monuments, tombstones and various forms of texts and inscriptions. Narratives are embedded in different, materially mediated spaces as in the textual and scripted forms.

In their studies of First World War battlefield sites, Clarke and McAuley (2013) suggest two types of narrative exits through different materially and symbolically mediated spaces. Government and associated institutions manage and communicate the dominant narratives of official culture concerning moral and emotional aspects of history, myths and legends, whereas the little narrative or vernacular attributed to individuals complement and enrich the significance of official narratives and link closely to public memory (Clarke and McAuley 2013). Vernacular narratives derive from accounting and storytelling practices of personal experiences including notes and diaries, family history and privately held records that eventually become contributions to the continually emerging and reassembled discourse of the First World War (Clarke and McAuley 2013).



Unlike the dual (personal and collective) nature of narratives in mainstream pilgrimage and cultural tourism sites, this case study was not born out of a dominant, national history and war narratives. In fact, rather curiously, there was a palpable absence of the narratives of the ex-Far Eastern POWs in mainstream public discourse, both in Britain and Japan. It was the very absence of the formally acknowledged narratives of the POWs that caught the attention of the surviving POW veterans and those who claimed to discover the grave of the prisoners, which later was anchored as the site of the ex-POWs' pilgrimage. It took nearly half a century to bring it to people's attention. The FEPOWs' voices of the war experience in the Far East were eclipsed by the euphoric feeling generated by victory over Japan in the post war period.<sup>ii</sup> The discovery of the grave and the work undertaken in developing the reconciliation trip as a pilgrimage drew these two different discourses closer together.

According to Coleman and Elsner (1995), pilgrimage has a future, goal orientation, through which pilgrims produce testimony of their experience and which they use as a text for remembrance. With the inscriptions on the tombstones and descriptions given to the visitors in the battlefield and prison camp sites, the pilgrimage provides a commemorative experience for those pilgrims, along with the rekindling of personal memories. For the actual pilgrim this is an act of memory but for the aspiring pilgrim these objects provide an imaginative link with a sacred goal which, it is hoped, will be encountered in the future. Equally powerful are texts – accounts which pilgrims in all the major religions have left as testimony. These writings perhaps inspire future generations, but they can also serve as practical guides both to the physical journey and to its interpretation (Coleman and Elsner, 1995)

These significations, records and personal mementos taken from the pilgrimage enable pilgrims the opportunity to have a review of their life (Mills and Coleman, 2002), where they

work toward the resolution of past conflicts and issues, atonement for past acts or inaction, and reconciliation with family members and friends and with past foes. Life review can be embedded in the pilgrimage, where pilgrims reunite with their old friends and family after years of separation or estrangement, and return to their birthplace (or a place of significance) for a final visit (Butler 1963, Cohen and Taylor 1998, Murakami 2014, Webster, Bohlmeijer, and Westerhof 2010). Military pilgrimage, battlefield tourism and reunions provide the pilgrim-veterans with valuable opportunities to review their lives and provide meaning to the trip and experience that was otherwise regarded as ‘muddled middle’ and imbued with multiple, opposing significations and meanings. Sites of commemoration and pilgrimage sites ‘are framed in a precise set of expectations, formed by the pilgrims’ narrative and descriptions, and by widespread dissemination of images of the site’ (Keil 2005: 480). The pilgrimage is not just a recollection of the past, but also manages the future by framing expectations, driven by a complex set of motives, desires, and stakes and interests of the pilgrims.

### **Pilgrimage: meaning-making potential**

Pilgrimages involve many forms of rituals undertaken by the pilgrims, which in turn make a collective experience possible. Rituals have a meaning-making potential. Schnell and Pali (2013) analysed the pilgrimage to Santiago as *a personal ritual* from the perspective of implicit religiosity. In the psychological theory of implicit religiosity, rituals are identified as one of three universal religious structures (along with myths and experiences of transcendence) with strong meaning-making potential. Personal rituals are defined as formalised patterns of action, pointing beyond the actual event to a particular meaning imbued by the actor. After the journey, due to personal rituals acquired from the pilgrimage, pilgrims experience life as being significantly more meaningful, and crises of meaning are overcome. ‘Pilgrims also report a strengthened commitment to vertical self transcendence,

horizontal self transcendence and self actualisation. These changes occur independently of the motivation of pilgrimage' (Schnell and Pali 2013: 887). Clearly, personal transformation is triggered by the pilgrimage that integrates the personal memory into the collective and changes the way in which the person's life is ordered.

Following the above discussion of the pilgrimage as commemorative practice, pilgrimage can be conceived as a practice through which new meanings can be produced with a newly opened dialogue between two parties, which were formerly apart. In this sense, pilgrimage is a valuable opportunity (space and time) for people with troubled pasts to explore new meanings and new interpretations, together with those others, with whom the dialogue was previously closed. Elsewhere, studies of subcultures, including a large number of connected, inter-related and overlapping music scenes, have shown how discourses of liminality and rites of passage frame the spatial construction of pilgrimages and that travelling to these particular configurations of open, closed and negotiable abstracted spaces is both an act of journey and pilgrimage (Jaimangal-Jones, Pritchard and Morgan 2010). These dynamic configurations of pilgrimage are a crucial feature where the veterans, who took part in the pilgrimage to Japan, were allowed to see themselves vis-à-vis the Japanese in a new light and where a dialogue between the British veterans and the Japanese who were involved in the prison camp during the war, started to emerge.

### **Liminality**

Meaning potential emerges within the liminal process, that is, in the duration of the pilgrimage, away from the everyday. The British veterans, of whom I shall present the case returned to Japan, a prisoners of war camp where they were interned, in the name of the pilgrimage. During the trip the hostile attitude of those veterans' toward the Japanese gradually faded and they began to accept them as a potential companion. According to Turner's theory of pilgrimage, rites of passage involve a crucial in-between state where fixed

meanings of the everyday are reordered and new meanings start to emerge. The pilgrims' participation in rituals involves more than physical movement, therefore. Several studies stress the importance of studying 'movement' which entail both local/short-term and distant/long-term journeys to unfamiliar lands such as pilgrimage (Coleman and Eade 2004). Beckstead (2010), for example, points out that orthodox psychology has traditionally neglected human-beings-on-the-move and concentrated on fixed structures. Through a cultural psychological approach one can study practices of pilgrimages along with other journeys and shed light on how human beings cross boundaries. In the context of pilgrimage and related forms of tourism, as we have seen, liminality shows that pilgrimage experiences are not static nor a given but, rather, are dynamic and negotiated by the various social actors involved in the pilgrimage activities.

### **The case for Anglo-Japanese reconciliation**

Here I give a fuller description of the case of the Anglo-Japanese reconciliation over the war and internment in Japan as it 'came to me' and developed as my research project. In doing so, aforementioned concepts and theories are made more relevant to battlefield pilgrimage practices, international commemoration and reconciliation. This pilgrimage was not a straightforward matter of the veterans recalling the past but involves reconciliation and addressing the need for two parties to work together. Following the work of social remembering and collective reminiscence (Buchanan and Middleton 1995, Middleton and Edwards 1990), the pilgrimage provides the opportunity for a moral reordering of the past and those veterans' remembering of the troubling past into the future that was yet to be inscribed. I shall address the above-mentioned key theoretical issues of pilgrimage as commemoration and as impetus for reconciliation.

I first came into contact with former POWs when I attended a seminar in October 1998, several months after the staged protests against the Japanese emperor visiting the UK.

The seminar was entitled: ‘Toward Greater Cross Cultural Understanding’ organized and hosted by the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. The seminar was open to the general public and included talks by invited speakers from the media, academia, and representatives from veteran and civilian internee associations in Britain. In the audience were Japanese expatriates who had been involved in helping organise a reconciliation trip to Japan during 1992 for a group of British veterans, who had been held prisoners of war in Thailand and Japan during the Second World War. These veterans termed themselves and were consequently known as the ‘Iruka Boys’ after the place where they were held captive and worked as POWs in Japan.

Following the SOAS seminar, in the spring of 1999, I met up with one of the Japanese expatriate seminar participants, named Hanako Hayashi (a pseudonym) who had been involved in the first and second Iruka Boys’ reconciliation trips and accompanied the veterans and their families as a translator. She agreed to help me with the research. At her home, Hanako showed me two large cardboard boxes of letters, notes, memos and newsletters, acquired during her involvement in the preparation for the reconciliation trip and the trip itself.

On the basis of a few initial meetings with Hanako, it became apparent that the first Iruka Boys’ reconciliation trip to Japan had made a considerable impact on those veterans and family members’ lives as well as the lives of those others involved both in Britain and Japan. Thanks to her sharing information with me, I was able to grasp a fuller background to the first reconciliation trip: how it came into being, who took part in it, and what sort of impact had resulted through participation. She then helped me to contact the key individual, Keiko Holmes<sup>iii</sup>, who worked tirelessly for materialising the first Iruka Boys’ reconciliation trip to Japan in 1992 and subsequent few trips. At the meeting in early summer of 1998, Keiko pointed me to her books and activities and events for peace and reconciliation (Holmes

1998, 2003). They were underpinned by the principle of the Christian notion of ‘agape’ (the Greek word for love) and healing toward those British veterans.

Meanwhile, again with Hanako’s help, I contacted the former POWs and arranged to meet some of them. I wanted to hear from them about their experience of captivity in the Far East and their views on the consequences of having participated in the first Iruka Boys’ trip to Japan in 1992. During the preparation for my interview visits to Iruka Boys in early summer of 1999, whilst developing the interview schedule and working out the logistics for the interviews, many questions came to my mind. Who exactly were the Iruka Boys? Why did it take nearly half a century to embark on a reconciliation process? How did the reconciliation trip come about? How did they come to call the trip a pilgrimage to Japan? These were the kind of questions that I had in mind. The research was completed in 2002, revealing a complex web and network of activities, places, people and circumstances leading to the Iruka Boys’ making their trip as a pilgrimage to Iruka, Japan. The story of the Anglo-Japanese reconciliation is an unprecedented case of how the British FEPOW were led to rebuild a bridge between themselves and Japan, a bridge once broken, lost, but now being repaired (Murakami 2012).

### **Iruka Boys: the British Far Eastern Prisoners of War**

During World War Two, in the summer of 1942, three hundred FEPOWs were sent to work in a copper mine in a place then known as Iruka (now known as Kiwa-cho, Mie Prefecture), situated deep in the mountains of central Japan. Initially, they were captured in 1941 and had been working as POWs on the now-infamous Thai–Burma Railway, known as ‘the death railway’. On transferring to Japan, the FEPOWs laboured alongside Japanese mine workers and students deployed as part of the Japanese war effort to mine copper in Iruka. The interviewees reported that Iruka ‘was a much better camp’ than the camps in Thailand. However, notwithstanding these apparently better conditions, 16 prisoners did not survive.

At the end of hostilities, before returning to Britain, the surviving prisoners set up a small wooden cross and a commemorative plaque at the gravesite of their fellow prisoners on the edge of the village. After the British men left, the grave was maintained by the local villagers as part of a community project.

Sometime after the war, the villagers moved this grave to a new location, about 100 meters away from its original site. According to the villagers, who showed me around, the remains of the deceased were moved and consecrated by a priest in a Buddhist ceremony. Along with the relocation, the grave was refurbished and a memorial was erected. What used to be a small gravesite with a simple wooden cross was transformed into a cemetery with a large copper cross in the centre and a marble slab with the names of the 16 soldiers engraved in English. Out of respect for the war dead, a service of dedication was held to celebrate the completion of the village-wide project of building the new cemetery. The service was attended by local dignitaries, village elders and residents, along with former students who had worked in the copper mine with the Iruka Boys, the British POWs, during their captivity in the prison camp. The building of this cemetery dramatically changed many people's lives.

After the war the prison camp operation was discontinued and the government-owned copper mine and its refinery were privatised. The only remaining sign of the British presence during the war was the refurbished memorial at the new gravesite. In the late 1980s, this cemetery came to the attention of a Japanese woman named Keiko Holmes during one of her 'homecoming visits'. She was born in the village a few years after the war and left after graduating from high school to work in Tokyo. She later married a British national and moved to London. As I discuss in further detail below, according to the newspaper report (Holmes 1992) the discovery of the gravesite was a significant event in her life.

Around the same time, the cemetery also came to the attention of Father Bede Cleary, who was a Catholic priest in Shingu, a local city. He and a colleague from England, Father

Murphy, happened to drive by the village and noticed the cemetery. They realised that it was an unknown detail of World War II and the area's association with British veterans. Father Murphy wrote in *Far East*, a Catholic newspaper published in the United Kingdom, about how deeply he was intrigued and impressed with a cemetery built by the Japanese for British POWs. A former Iruka Boy read Father Murphy's article and contacted him. Until then, the existence of the cemetery was virtually unknown to the Japanese outside the village, let alone in Britain. With the help of the villagers, Father Murphy and Keiko Holmes were put in touch with one another and a correspondence developed between them. Keiko Holmes was soon in touch with the surviving Iruka Boys and began visiting them in their homes in England.

Despite initially being met with a cold shoulder and resentment by the veterans, she continued to attend the British Legion's national and local meetings, telling the FEPOW veterans about the grave for the Iruka Boys. During these visits, she thought it would be best to bring the surviving Iruka Boys to Japan to see the grave and meet the Japanese villagers. She started to make arrangements for organising a reconciliation visit back to Japan and fundraising for the trip with Japanese volunteers in London and Japan. The memorial site and the circumstances of its creation and maintenance became the focus of efforts to organise a reconciliation visit for the surviving POWs. The trip was named as 'the pilgrimage to Japan' and became known within the circle of people involved in organising and participating in the trip. A small booklet recording the history of the discovery of the grave in Iruka and how Keiko bridged the two parties together was created in order to keep the group together and to help fundraising.

The trip was initiated and supported by those who shared the common goal of achieving reconciliation regarding the war and a better understanding between the two peoples, i.e. by the grass-root efforts of Keiko and her contacts and volunteers rather than by the Japanese or U.K. government or any other official organisations. As the public attention



to this unprecedented reconciliation trip to Japan increased in both countries, the reconciliation trip became known as being synonymous with the Iruka Boys' pilgrimage to Japan.

In 1992 Keiko and a few Japanese volunteers including Hanako accompanied the 26 former Iruka Boys and their family members. Although a former prison camp is not a sacred site for religious pilgrimage purposes, as we have seen, those on the trip felt that it was appropriate to call it a pilgrimage. The frail and ailing Iruka boys in their late 70s managed to keep up with a taxing international trip and an itinerary of public meetings and receptions. Here we can observe that relying on a frame of tradition and national culture helps to generate a moral sense of the pilgrimage site and its associated past, whilst creating unity amongst pilgrims despite their differences. At the joint memorial, hymns were sung in both English and Japanese and flowers were dedicated to the grave. Representatives from both parties prayed for peace and the working toward sustaining friendship between the two countries.

As part of the festive frame for social mediator (Picard 2015), there were a number of convivial activities between the British veterans and the Japanese participants including informal conversations, exchanges of gifts, singing songs and dining together, which were included in the itinerary. The social activities in the festive frame (Picard 2015) highlight an important aspect of the pilgrimage as they helped break what used to be a solid boundary between the British veterans and the Japanese camp guards and student workers. In the liminal process of the pilgrimage they were brought closer together, not just physically but psychologically to work toward achieving reconciliation.

### **Expanding the pilgrimage**

Following the first FEPOWs' pilgrimage to Japan, an association called Kiwa International Exchange Association was established. This was initiated by the alumni of the local high

school and aimed at encouraging young people to develop an international awareness. The association was instrumental in leading to the second Iruka Boys' trip to Japan, which materialised in 1994. This time 15 people came from the UK. The group included more personnel than the original Iruka Boys, i.e. three Iruka Boys, four FEPOWS who were interned in other parts of Japan, a nurse who was held in Hong Kong prison camp, a grandson of a FEPOW and Keiko. They spent time with the local high school students at a welcome reception and furthered friendships with them, visiting local tourist attractions, whilst staying with local Japanese families. The highlight of the pilgrimage was the joint memorial held at the cemetery with 200 participants from Japan and the UK. The British veterans met former Japanese copper mine workers in another nearby city and exchanged their memories and renewed their friendship.

The exchange between Kiwa and British former POW members and related others became further extended as 28 Japanese people from Kiwa, consisting of key members of the association and high school students, visited the UK for a joint memorial with the Iruka Boys as well as visiting major touristic sites in the UK. Like some battlefield pilgrimages, pilgrims, when accompanied with their family members and friends, may not necessarily keep their pilgrimages' goal as totally religious, spiritual or personal. The present case seems to also highlight a complex nature of battlefield pilgrimage practices, where individual motives and goals intersect with and are shaped by collective ones.

Another group, the Kinan International Exchange Association, began expanding the scope and format of the Iruka pilgrimage and applied it to take young people from Japan to Cowra, Australia, where over 1000 Japanese were interned and over 200 died during 1944. They held a joint memorial with the Australians to commemorate the death of the Japanese prisoners and prayed for peace and intercultural understanding. The pilgrimage offers a

dynamic potential, where new themes and values are incorporated and assembles and binds together the old and the new generations of participants.

### **Personal chain of reconciliation**

In the continuously expanding scope and format of this Anglo-Japanese reconciliation process one might wonder how the personal significance of the trip is considered. After my research visits in 1999 I kept in touch with a few Iruka Boys. They sent me some personal greetings in response to my letter of appreciation for the research interview. One of them sent me a thank-you card dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999, saying: ‘I feel that our meeting [the research interview] was another valuable link in my *personal chain of reconciliation*’ (Adams 1999, emphasis mine). For him, the two visits to Japan seemed to be the culmination of his long personal journey of reconciling with his troubled past sufferings, having been deeply affected by the Second World War and his captivities in the Far East. The pilgrimages opened up his links with people and places beyond the UK and offered numerous extraordinary encounters, exchanges and dialogues with those Japanese and British people he would not have met otherwise after returning to the UK at the end of the war. After the first trip in 1992, he started corresponding with a few Japanese individuals whom he had met during the trip and this encouraged him to return again on the visit organised by Keiko Holmes and the Kinan International Exchange Association.

In the years after the first pilgrimage, the most important part – the ritual ceremonies – followed a fixed format of a joint memorial and reception, the singing of Anglican hymns in both English and Japanese and the laying of flowers, a cross and a wreath dedicated to the grave of the Iruka Boys by representatives from both sides. The Anglican Church service was deemed essential to making the pilgrimage appear authentic and credible to the returning veterans. Both Japanese and British representatives gave speeches and prayed not only for the repose of their Boys but also, more generally, for global peace and continuing friendship

between the two countries. The Iruka Boys, who returned to Kiwa for the second and third joint memorial ceremonies, kept in touch with the high school students, who visited Britain and engaged in activities organised by the Kinan International Exchange Association.

Over time, the Iruka cemetery site and what it means to people visiting the site has changed as those original Iruka Boys, villagers and organisation committee members died or dropped out of the pilgrimage due to poor health. The site and its network of social relations is continuously being reconfigured, shaping and reshaping the practice of reconciliation year after year (Murakami and Middleton 2006). It has become more than just a site of pilgrimage for the Iruka Boys and has even become a site of joint international commemoration and reconciliation. During the late 1990s it attracted and reached out to involve a younger generation of Japanese, such as the junior high school and high school students. Before the joint memorial ceremony in 1992, most people in the village, especially the young people, had not known or had been taught about the local history of the copper mine and its POW camp.

Since the 1992 pilgrimage, the Iruka cemetery has become a site for unearthing a hidden local history that the Japanese school history lessons and textbooks did not cover. The Kiwa mine museum, which was built in 1995 as part of the municipality's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary to showcase the history of the mine industry since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, includes the records of the British POWs having worked in the mine. The pilgrimage site continues to expand beyond the original people involved and the story of the Anglo-Japanese reconciliation was translated into a more general story of peace, friendship and intercultural understanding. The previous success of receiving the pilgrimage provided an impetus for the entire village to build bridges with the UK and Australia.

## **In closing**

In this chapter I have sought to analyse military pilgrimage through a case study of Anglo-Japanese reconciliation over the treatment of British prisoners of war during the Second World War. Beyond cognitive-psychological, mentalist models, which focus on the cognitive resolution of conflict, I have turned to the role played by the pilgrimage journey and associated ritual actions in achieving reconciliation among those involved.

Reconciliation as a psychological process can be studied fruitfully, therefore, in terms of people's movement to particular sites of deep, existential meaning as well as how they engage in rituals and ceremonies undertaken at these sites including the prisoner of war camp and the grave. The site where the war is commemorated provides the material basis for reconciliation; the mental and the material intersect and interplay within a web of networks constantly connecting people with narratives and discourses, artefacts and places.

The veterans, who had difficulty with letting go their hard feelings toward the Japanese, in a serendipitous way benefited from a physical place where they could remember— collective memory was created and sustained by a material place as well as by social rituals of remembering. The pilgrimage provides a place and a time to honour the dead and to achieve a sense of fellowship or 'communitas'.

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<sup>i</sup> Since the war ended, the grave has been maintained by local Japanese villagers as part of the senior citizen's voluntary work for the community.

<sup>ii</sup> Recently there is a growing evidence of the museums' interest in showcasing of those British POWs in Europe as well as Easter Theatres of the Second World War (IWM, 2009-10).



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<sup>iii</sup> Keiko Holmes was awarded the OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in 1998.

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